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AST month I wrote about how, despite being portrayed by the government, and most of the media, as the enemy, support for trade unions is growing, as evidenced by the huge support from inside and outside the movement at Durham and Tolpuddle. This got me thinking. If the debate – not one to which we subscribe – is about ‘workers’ and ‘shirkers’, why are we under attack, on workers’ rights, tribunals, health and safety, and getting redress for members who have been traumatised or injured?

Then we learn that 1 million people are on zero hours contracts with no rights, annual leave or sick pay, a cancer growing in our industry with Colas, DCR, and WCR, which has to be addressed. We await Mr Cable’s review of this Victorian practice but hear zero concern from his coalition colleagues. Which brings me to two friends incensed at where we are politically.

Big Jack Housley, who is no longer with us, took an immense pride in ASLEF, our history and achievements but, more importantly, drives as people. He was a big, bluff Yorkshireman with a heart as big as a bucket, who fought and argued with pride for our people, and could not hide how much he cared or how much what we are and what we do matter.

Our thoughts are with his family and numerous friends at this difficult time; he will be much missed.

Steve Grant has had to stand down from his role as District Organiser. I was lucky enough to be elected as a DO around the time he was so have seen first hand the tireless efforts he and Terry Wilkinson put in for our members on the Tube. I would like to pay tribute to someone who, as a colleague, and a friend, has given me loyalty and support, and never been shy of expressing his views, with a wonderful sense of humour. I wish Steve and Doreen all the best.

Mick Whelan,
General Secretary
Passengers pay the soaring cost of rail privatisation

All passengers are fed up with being asked by the government – and the privatised train operating companies – to foot the bill for the failed Conservative policy of rail privatisation.

Fares, from January, when the next inflation-busting price rises kick in, will be a staggering 40% higher than they were in 2008 while wages, by contrast, have risen by just 15%. Passenger groups say commuters are furious that fares are now rising nearly three times faster than wages and way above inflation.

Some season tickets have risen by more than £1,000 in the last six years. A Reading to London zone 1 season ticket, for example, which was £3,710 in 2008 will cost £4,904 in January.

Mick Whelan, general secretary of ASLEF, said: ‘We condemn soaring fares for passengers – just one of the increased costs of privatisation we are all suffering – which is driving more and more people into transport poverty. The increased costs of travel, and the inability of some people now to afford to travel, contrasts very sharply with the increased profits made by the privatised train operating companies, and the money they are taking out of Britain’s railways, which should, of course, be a public service in the public sector.’

Passenger Focus surveys reveal that fewer than half of regular rail passengers think the privatised service provides value for money and most are furious at being ‘short-changed by greedy train companies’ putting up prices while wages are falling.

Mick added: ‘While train company revenues continue to increase, this doesn’t benefit the passengers. Investment by TOCs in trains and stations is minimal, and the average age of rolling stock has increased since privatisation.’

Action for Rail marked the inflation figures last month, on which the next round of fare increases is based, with protests around the country. Activists handed out postcards to passengers at 47 stations including Berwick-upon-Tweed, Birmingham New Street, Bristol Temple Meads, Edinburgh Waverley, Glasgow Central, Liverpool Lime Street, London Paddington, Manchester Piccadilly, Newcastle, Southampton, and York.

Frances O’Grady, general secretary of the TUC, said: ‘Every year hard-pressed rail commuters have to hand over an ever-greater share of their earnings just to get to and from work. Wage-busting rises are not even going on much-needed service improvements because public subsidies are lining the pockets of the shareholders of the private rail companies.

You only have to look at the nationalised East Coast main line to see that public ownership of the railways not only works but provides a better deal for passengers and taxpayers alike.’

The TUC’s rail fare rise projector at www.tuc.org.uk/ railfareprojector reveals how fares have soared since 2008

Have a heart, says Mick

Mick Whelan has written to Frances O’Grady asking her to actively encourage all unions affiliated to the TUC to promote the Organ Donor Register, which records people’s agreement to the use of their organs for transplant after death. This follows a motion passed at AAD in Edinburgh and a recent executive committee resolution to promote the register in ASLEF.

‘Last year 2,700 patients – both old and young – received life-saving transplants,’ said Mick. ‘These transplants are sometimes the only treatment available for those suffering from disease or failure of a major organ. Nearly everyone would take an organ if needed but only one in three of us has joined the register.

‘Thanks to scientific advances, the number of people who can benefit from a transplant after an injury or surgery is expected to rise. The heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, pancreas and small bowel can currently be transplanted. Body tissue such as corneas, skin, bone, tendons, cartilage and heart valves can also be used to restore sight, reconstruct limbs and graft skin.

‘We are concerned about the number of people who die each day because of the shortage of organs available. That’s why we welcome the recent change in the law which will make Wales the first UK country to adopt an opt-out organ donation system. This could come into force by 2015 and may be followed by a similar change to the law in England and Scotland.’

The link of love

The Labour Representation Committee is meeting on 3 September at the Conway Hall in London to launch its campaign to keep the link between the Labour Party and the trade unions. It says: ‘The creation of the Labour Party opened up the possibility of political representation for working-class people. The relationship between the trade unions and the party has been and remains central to the role of the Labour Party in representing the interests of working people. We therefore support the collective affiliation of trade unions to the party; collective decision making by trade unionists within the party; and representation for, and involvement of, trade unions at every level of the party.’

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Off the rails

- **JOHN REDWOOD**, the Tory MP for Wokingham, Berkshire, is so right-wing he contributes to *Freedom Today*, the journal – known as East Ham, because it’s one stop short of Barking – of the Freedom Association. You might think that soaring fares and much bigger taxpayer subsidies since the privatisation of Britain’s railways in 1994 – even Margaret Thatcher described as a privatisation too far – prove that fragmentation of the service doesn’t work. Not a bit of it! Mr Redwood, who is referred to by other members of his party as, variously, ‘the Vulcan’, the ‘redneck’, and ‘Deadwood’, reckons we need not less but more competition! And, inevitably, like Baldrick in *Blackadder*, he has a cunning plan. ‘The need to provide more services and open new locations with a competitive fare structure is crucial; he bumbles, calling for ‘new long distance, high speed, open access rail services’ the length and breadth of Britain.’

- **PETER HITCHENS**, writing in the *Daily Mail* in the light of *The Great Train Robbery*, a report by the Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change at Manchester University, slammed John Major’s privatisation of the railways as ‘a taxpayer-funded pretence at private railways, which costs far more (and is less efficient and much more heavily subsidised) than the nationalised British Rail it replaced.’ Hitchens, not someone with whom we normally find ourselves rubbing ideological shoulders, added: ‘Nothing except a desire to follow neo-liberal dogma at all costs justifies its [the franchise system’s] existence, and without the state discreetly holding it up, it would collapse.’

- **CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS**, released by the National Archives at Kew under the 30-year rule, reveal that Mrs Thatcher was planning in 1983 to use troops to move coal in the event of miners’ strike. Government minutes note: ‘It might be necessary to examine more radical options including the use of servicemen to move pithead stocks to power stations by rail and road.’ Officials tried to dissolve the Prime Minister by saying that using troops would be a ‘formidable undertaking’.

- **THE DISUSED BROMPTON ROAD UNDERGROUND STATION** in Knightsbridge, used as a secret military command centre by Winston Churchill during the Second World War, is on the market for £20 million. The station – owned by the Ministry of Defence – closed in 1934 but TfL still owns the platforms and has sealed them off. So while a prospective purchaser will get a drill hall, officers’ mess and lots of tunnels, you won’t get the chance to beat the rush hour crush.

- **DAVID MAIDMENT**, who set up the charity Railway Children in 1995, after meeting homeless kids on a trip to India, has had a freight train named after him. ‘It’s a great honour,’ said David. ‘And a chance to thank the thousands of railwaymen and women in Britain who have helped us protect street children around the world.’
Health and safety on an even Keele

**JULIAN VAUGHAN**, health and safety rep, East Finchley, reports from the Hazards 2013 conference at Keele University...

The conference, which is held annually and attended by health and safety reps from around the UK, was dedicated to the 167 workers killed on Piper Alpha 25 years ago. It comprises workshops, meetings and keynote speakers from across H&S.

Dave Smith from the Blacklist Support Group spoke passionately about the industrial scale of blacklisting in the construction business – an issue not confined to that industry. He called for a public enquiry into the issue of blacklisting and the collection of information on H&S reps which, in Dave’s case, included his NI number, union credentials and material about his wife and brother.

Louise Taggart from FACK – Families Against Corporate Killers – whose brother was killed at work made an emotional speech which brought home the human cost of poor H&S practices which can be lost when presented as facts and figures.

Professor Phil Taylor of Strathclyde University spoke with passion and humour about the scourge of ‘performance management’ and the obsession with monitoring every aspect of work, KPIs, performance reviews and the effect these have on the worker.

Other speakers included Hugh Robertson from the TUC and Omane George from the Asia Monitor Resource Centre in Hong Kong who talked about the effect of the lack of H&S regulation in South-East Asia.

Workshops over the weekend included workplace violence, fire risk assessment, enforcement of H&S laws and effective H&S committees.

ASLEF reps found the conference informative, especially in getting the bigger picture about the unprecedented attack on health and safety legislation by this coalition government.

- You can get more information about the work of Hazards – which relies on sponsorship from unions at national and branch level; we were pleased that ASLEF provides support from both – at www.hazardscampaign.org.uk.
- Information about Hazards magazine, one of the very few union-friendly publications, can be found at www.hazards.org

Fifty years on

**ALAN MOSS** reflects on a memorial service for Jack Mills and David Whitby

Something happened at 03:00 on 8 August 1963 that would be remembered in railway history for ever. Fifty years to the day later a fitting memorial was held at Crewe railway station to remember those involved in the train robbery. While the media glorified the perpetrators of this crime, the ASLEF members were forgotten by all except the railway fraternity and the families of those involved. The driver, Jack Mills, and his second man, David Whitby, never recovered from the trauma and their early passing was a result of what happened.

The memorial service was conducted by the railway chaplain Richard Cook, who is well known by railway employees. Guests spoke about the glorification of those criminals and thugs who carried out the robbery and how it affected the victims. It was both humbling and a honour to be among family members of Brothers Mills and Whitby and the retired members of our fraternity who came to pay their respects. It is hoped that once the current refurbishment of Crewe station is complete a permanent memorial will be erected.

Runaway crash cleaner trains to drive

A 22-year old Swedish cleaner, wrongly accused in January of stealing a train and crashing it into a building in Solstjöbaden, a suburb of Stockholm, is to become a train driver. The woman, known only as Sara, the name of the character played by Rebecca De Mornay in the film *Runaway Train*, was cleaning a commuter train when the first carriages became decoupled and she was trapped as it sped off along the tracks until crashing through a barrier into a block of flats. While Sara recovered from multiple injuries, a driver
duly accused her of stealing the train and causing the accident. But after an investigation absolved her – and blamed a series of company safety breaches – the firm is now training her to become a driver.

**BID TO CUT SUICIDES** Samaritans in Wales are visiting stations to raise awareness of the help available to those feeling distressed and depressed in a bid to reduce the number of people committing suicide. The charity says the number of suicides is soaring – up 30% in two years – because of job cuts and benefit cuts. Helen Smith, director of the Samaritans in Cardiff, said: ‘With the economic climate, it’s a very difficult time for people.’

**Trevor’s badge of honour**

After last year’s success Trevor Southgate, LLC rep, Ipswich, has made another badge (to a different design). They cost £5 (plus £1 p+p) and cheques, payable to Trevor, should be sent to him at 56 Leggatt Drive, Bramford, Ipswich, IP8 4EX. Profits will be split equally between the national Poppy Appeal and his local Royal British Legion branch.

Our smart new tie clips are just £3.50 (including p+p); email admin@aslef.org.uk or visit our online shop at www.aslef.org.uk.
Keeping the East Coast on track

ASLEf activists were joined by members of the RMT, TSSA, and Unite, as well as Labour MPs and local councillors, to hand out leaflets to passengers at stations up and down the East Coast main line as Action for Rail stepped up its campaign to keep the service in the public sector.

General secretary Mick Whelan said: ‘The East Coast is ours. It’s owned by the government on behalf of every taxpayer. That means every penny of profit is reinvested in the service or returned to the taxpayer rather than being taken out of the industry, and the British economy, and sent offshore in the form of dividends to shareholders.

‘More than £800m will have been returned to the Treasury, and the taxpayer, by the end of this year. But the government, ahead of a general election it fears it will lose, is falling over itself in an unseemly rush to hand our service back to a privateer. And that means higher fares for passengers and more money disappearing into shareholders’ pockets.

‘Public ownership has proved to be an enormous success for passengers, taxpayers, and employees alike. That’s why we are calling on the government to think again. Because the East Coast is a successful model for how our railways should be run.’

ORR opens the door for reps

MICK HOLDER reports on an opportunity for health and safety reps

The Office of Rail Regulation has recently underlined the need for employers to address shortcomings on occupational health issues by ensuring that suitable risk assessments are done – and this presents ASLEf health and safety reps with a chance to raise the issue in the workplace, at joint safety committees and at company council level.

In an occupational health update the ORR says: ‘Our overall assessment is that the rail industry under performs in managing health compared to safety risks, and lags behind wider industry. Some rail duty holders are failing to achieve sustained legal compliance in key health risk areas.’

The ORR adds: ‘Common weaknesses include poor understanding of task-based health risk assessment; and failure to follow hierarchy of control principles in managing health risks. Underlying many of these weaknesses was a lack of competence among, and monitoring of, front line managers for health risk control at site level.’

Among the key questions the ORR wants employers to ask is: ‘Are health risk assessments task-based, and have workers been involved so assessments are realistic and meaningful?’

Reps should grasp this opportunity with both hands by asking their employer: Have any health-based risk assessments ever been done? If yes, on which issues? Were reps or employees consulted? Are they up to date? And can the reps have a copy?

Reps should find out from their members what health issues that might be caused by their work are affecting them. An excellent way of doing this is by bodymapping (see link below). Further information about health issues at your workplace can be found by checking the accident book, RIDDOR report forms, and whether any sick leave relates to a potentially work related condition.

With all this information reps should be able to push their employer to fill in any gaps by ensuring all issues raised have been risk assessed to a ‘suitable and sufficient’ standard and that ASLEf reps have been consulted ‘in good time’.

The ORR’s occupational health programme update can be downloaded at www.rail-reg.gov.uk/upload/pdf/oh-programme-update-jul2013.pdf and you can sign up to get these quarterly updates automatically at www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.2974

You can find more information about bodymapping at www.hazards.org/dyresearch/bodymapping.pdf

Rail travel reaches record high

New figures from the Office of Rail Regulation show that rail use in Britain is still on the rise. Passengers racked up 1.23 billion journeys in 2011-12 – 6% up on the previous year – and the highest since records began.

500 CLUB: The winning number in July was 32 and J Haslam scooped the prize of £326.
Technology has made job more, not less, demanding

CHRIS PROCTOR was on holiday in Galicia last month when a high speed train running from the capital Madrid to Ferrol on the Galician coast was derailed in a terrible crash at Santiago de Compostela. Here he reports on the human cost of the tragedy, and reflects on the mixed feelings of the railway community, both here and in Spain...

The whole region of Galicia in north-west Spain was struck by the tragic train crash near Santiago de Compostela on 24 July. Municipal celebrations to mark the religious feast of St James of Compostela – Spain’s patron saint – were cancelled, flags were lowered and the entire community was affected by the disaster. We shared their feeling of utter helplessness. Even our offers of blood were politely refused, partly because the Galicians themselves gave freely, and partly because administrative checks would have taken too long.

Because of my years at ASLEF, I was haunted by the vision of the maquinista who clambered alive from the wreckage that killed 79 passengers.

He set out that morning a normal working man. By evening he was a monster. The media always seeks simple answers and it was provided with one. The driver was in control of a train that went into the bend – Curva de A Grandeira – at around twice the authorised speed of 80km/h. Therefore he was responsible for those deaths. He became an idle, careless and wicked criminal.

HUGE RESPONSIBILITIES

I recalled with a chill how earlier that day I had almost – so nearly – turned our hire car to the left at a roundabout. I braked just in time; turned to the right; and breathed again. It was a tiny mistake and an enormous shock. But, as the expression goes, ’Nobody died.’ It wasn’t the same for Francisco José Garzón; for him a moment’s inattention made him a national hate figure.

Train drivers endure such huge responsibilities every working day. One momentary lapse and there is not an accident, but a tragedy. For most of us, having an off day doesn’t matter too much. If I write something clumsy, I can change it later, or someone will read it before it’s printed and point out that it doesn’t make sense. But, in the driver’s cab, a similar off day can spell a disaster like Santiago.

It takes a special skill to hold your attention and maintain your concentration over the same route time after time. I take my hat off to you. But ignorant cynics believe the job is easier now because you have technology to help. There’s not so much for you to do.

MORE DEMANDING

I believe technology has made the driving job more, not less, demanding. Decades ago, the driver knew that everything to do with the train, for the duration of the journey, was his or her responsibility. The driver had to be alert to, and know about, every bend and peculiarity of the track. How much more difficult is it to stay utterly focused when you may only be called upon to react on spasmodic occasions?

The investigations into what happened at Angrois will show Garzón (above) was haunted by the vision of the tragedy, and reflects on the mixed feelings of the railway community, both here and in Spain...

The Boris Johnsons of this world argue that as computers can now control a train, who needs a driver? Yet automatic braking systems are not infallible: Garzón, on the final leg of his 400 mile journey from Madrid, had been told he had the most advanced technology in the world. Boris’s desire to remove drivers from the cabs of London Underground trains comes from his insistence that you don’t need to pay someone to sit in the cab when a computer controls the train speed. The answers to his argument were strewn across the track at Santiago.

AVERTS A DISASTER

When an incident like this happens people forget the hundreds of times every day when a driver does the right thing and averts a disaster. In Galicia in July it seems probable that both technology and humanity failed to prevent a tragedy. But this is no reason to rid passengers of a second chance. It is, rather, an argument for having two people in the cab. Technology should be in the dock quite as much as Garzón. It is stupid to deny that computers are just as fallible as humans; it ignores the evidence. Have you never had a computer programme close down unexpectedly, or inexplicably lost an internet connection?

DESPERATE DESIRES

Perhaps, too, we need to re-examine our desperate desire for increased speed. It is self-evident that anything travelling at 250 miles an hour is less safe than something travelling at half that speed. Are we really so desperate in our hurries? Maybe a more comfortable seat is a better solution than a quicker ride.

The investigations into what happened at Angrois will continue for weeks and months. But, for me, two things are obvious: technology in the cab is not as great a benefit to a driver as its exponents argue; and the job of driving trains is more pressurised and vital than ever.
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He who pays the piper

In the wake of the government lobbying scandal SIMON WELLER, our national organiser, asks if proposed reforms are really about the transparency of lobbying or just a transparent attack on the trade unions...

With the Tories embroiled in yet another lobbying scandal, and questions being asked in Parliament about conflicts of interest, the Conservatives have gone for the oldest trick in the conjuror’s bag of misdirections: attack the trade unions.

You would have thought that the relationship of the Prime Minister’s aide Lynton Crosby with the tobacco manufacturers and the sudden dropping of plain cigarette packaging legislation would have put the focus firmly on the revolving door of David Cameron’s political advisers, big business, and the ears of Conservative Party policy makers. Particularly when citizens are campaigning, demonstrating, and marching against the coalition’s brutal cuts and its failure to get the economy moving again.

Tim Yeo, Tory MP for Suffolk South, was forced to stand down as chairman of the Select Committee on Energy and Climate Change after he told undercover reporters how he coached a client, John Smith, managing director of GB Rail Freight, on how to answer questions and influence his committee.

Questions are also being asked about the extension of a controversial Conservative scheme which gives corporations privileged access to government. The wheeze, devised by Lord Green, in his heavily criticised strategic relations initiative, gives multinational companies, including oil, telecoms, and pharmaceutical giants, a direct line to ministers and officials and a chance to influence government policy.

Yet instead of addressing these issues – of a ‘pay to play’ culture at the heart of the Conservative Party – a nasty little measure was put before Parliament a day before the summer recess (to minimise the opportunity to respond) and promoted as a progressive bill to bring about transparency. It is not and will not; it says nothing about who the lobbyists are talking to and the clients who are paying them.

The bill even makes a virtue of a loophole that allows lobbying firms to keep their clients secret if they meet a minister’s advisers and not the ministers of the crown or permanent secretaries themselves.

What should have been a register of lobbyists – so the rest of us can find out what they’re up to – has, instead, singled out the trade union movement for special attention. Britain’s largest voluntary movement, representing more than six million members, has a legal right to campaign and consult as part of this country’s pluralist democracy.

But the unions – which provide the clearest, most accountable, money in British politics – have come in for more scrutiny and additional burdens. As well as a reduction in how much trade unions – and carefully selected third parties – can provide for political candidates.

Not covered by the new proposals are the powerful employers’ organisations, even though the certification officer covers them as well, and secretive right-wing campaign groups such as the Taxpayers’ Alliance.

It is a shameless piece of political opportunism by David Cameron and Nick Clegg; as Tom Brake, Lib Dem Deputy Leader of the House, and nominally in charge of lobbying legislation for his party, inadvertently revealed when interviewed on Today on Radio 4; he was clearly unaware of the decision to tack on the union funding clauses.

Hidden among the proposals for a register of professional lobbyists are more bureaucratic burdens for unions – auditing of membership numbers, for example, a proposal that appears to have more to do with industrial action than political lobbying.

While the Tories don’t want to be seen to ban strikes they place more obstacles and red tape in the way of the unions’s ability to carry out their normal functions; actions in stark contrast to their calls for deregulation to free business from ‘unnecessary legal burdens’. All a trade union’s register of members provides is further opportunity for employers to run to the courts – the UK’s judiciary does not have a reputation as a pal of the worker – rather than sitting down and resolving the real industrial issue at hand.

The trade union movement is not opposed to a proper and comprehensive disclosure that covers all organisations seeking to influence public policy – but there is, arguably, very little that unions can add to what we already declare on our returns to the certification officer.

The trouble is this Tory government does not seem keen on a proper comprehensive disclosure system for government – but as just another opportunity to attack the trade union movement while carrying on with their business as usual.
On my bike to develop justice and equality for all

International development! What’s in it for us? KATY PROCTOR, ASLEF’s website editor and conference organiser, who is cycling to raise money for charity, reports back from the TUC...

AM cycling from Brighton to Paris and already ASLEF staff and members have been generous in sponsoring me. On this occasion I’m raising funds for the Argus Appeal, which relieves poverty, sickness and hardship in Sussex, helping old people and underprivileged children.

But in the past I have worked with international charities. I believe trade unions can make an important contribution to international development and would like to see more debate about the role we can play. In the run-up to the general election in 2015, this is a good time to look at alternatives to the Conservative-led coalition’s austerity agenda and to see where we fit into the bigger picture.

DONOR FATIGUE
When thinking about international development, many people think of charities and victims. A growing number of people are cutting back on the donations they make because of financial constraints or concerns about whether aid really reaches the people who need it.

They also question the UK’s commitment to a 0.7% aid budget, arguing that, in times of austerity, we can’t afford it.

Part of the problem is that some charities use very negative, disempowering images of the world’s poorest to guilt-trip audiences into giving more. We need to dispel misconceptions around aid and break down hostile ‘us and them’ divisions between national and international.

Aid and development are not affected by debt problems and their governments are being told they’ve overspent. One consequence is that the same austerity measures are affecting their jobs and services and 75% of the world’s poorest now live in middle-income countries.

We need to think beyond austerity and aid and think instead about wider, structural changes that will reduce inequality, redistribute wealth and help people out of poverty in the long term.

SOLIDARITY, NOT CHARITY
What many people in developing countries want is solidarity, not charity. It takes a mass movement of people to change global power structures and that is where the labour movement comes in. Trade unions emerged from a desire to address inequality and social injustice. This is still one of our fundamental principles. Unions can draw on large numbers of activists, they get involved in political issues and they are not afraid to take action.

In the past, coalitions that have brought together trade unions, NGOs and social movements have been powerful forces for change. Essentially we want the same thing and we are stronger if we make the same demands together. The Progressive Development movement is a group of trade unions and NGOs that came together last year to reflect on what perpetuates inequality, why things are getting worse, and what we can do about it. By building links with each other, with the ITF, ILO, ITUC, OECD, and with partners from organisations like Uncut and the Occupy movement, we can explore alternative frameworks and create new political platforms.

ASLEF attended a recent Progressive Development meeting and a discussion at the TUC with Ivan Lewis, Labour MP for Bury South and Shadow Secretary of State for International Development. Many of these ideas were mentioned and discussion about government policy centred on three key points: (i) decent jobs; (ii) social protection systems; (iii) addressing inequality.

There was a broad consensus that we should focus on getting justice and equality on the agenda for Labour’s election manifesto in 2015. It was also clear that if we are going to succeed in reducing the gap between the poor and the super-rich, we need strong trade unions, both here and overseas.

You’re not too late to sponsor Katy’s cycle ride – she leaves Brighton on Friday 30 August and hopes to arrive in Paris on Sunday 1 September – so if you would like to help please visit www.justgiving.com/Katy-Proctor. If you have any questions about any of the initiatives mentioned in this article please contact journal@aslef.org.uk

Donor fatigue: images used by Save the Children

Guilty trip: images used by Save the Children

Ivan Lewis: addressing inequality

What Katy did to raise money

The same. Donating money only helps in the short term, and perpetuates aid-dependency. We are seeing higher levels of inequality in the distribution of wealth and no amount of charity or aid can redress that problem. This doesn’t mean we should stop giving financial help, but if we want to improve standards of living around the world we need to think beyond that.

Real development is about achieving justice and equality in every country. This means tackling big international issues like corporate responsibility, making sure everyone pays fair taxes, making sure labour standards are respected, making sure that industries are environmentally sustainable, and so on.

AUSTERITY AND AID
For years, rich countries have been insisting that aid-recipient countries apply austerity measures and privatise their resources. Today rich countries are
ASLEF has become more involved with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign in recent years and was the first national trade union to submit a motion to their conference in January. Our executive committee resolved in May to send two ASLEF representatives on a trade union delegation to Palestine in July to assess the situation on the ground on behalf of our members. JAMES MCGOWAN reports on the fact-finding visit by Stan Moran, District 7 organiser, and Brian Corbett, EC member for District 7, to the West Bank.

The HE ASLEF delegation arrived in East Jerusalem just days after the toppling of President Mohammed Morsi in Egypt and amid rumours that US Secretary of State John Kerry’s diplomatic efforts were about to restart peace talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians. To arrive in the Middle East in a state of upheaval is to arrive in the Middle East.

As respectable trade union officials, Stan and Brian had no trouble passing Tel Aviv airport’s stringent security before heading on to their base off Nabus Road near the Old City in East Jerusalem, an area occupied by Israel since 1967 along with the West Bank and Gaza.

The landlocked West Bank, which includes East Jerusalem, is home to 2.5 million people. Since the 1993 Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Authority officially controls around 11% of the land (known as area A) with the remaining areas (B and C) controlled partially or entirely by Israel with responsibility for key issues such as security, building and planning. Travelling between each area involves negotiating a series of painstaking checkpoints. Around 500,000 Israeli settlers live in 150 settlements next to Palestinian villages, towns and cities across the West Bank – 200,000 of whom are in East Jerusalem. The scale of the settlements – vast communities high up on the hills – is striking.

NEGLECTED AND HAPHAZARD

Paul Cottrell, the late Palestinian rail expert, said: ‘The railways of the Middle East, and of Palestine in particular, have ever been the pawns to the vagaries and caprices of politics, of international rivalry, and of war. With a foundation based on the ever shifting sands of political and military expediency it is really no wonder that the railways in this part of the world should present today such a neglected and haphazard aspect.’

The Jaffa-Jerusalem line, constructed by the French company Veolia Transport (previously Connex) built the system and still have a stake in the Palestinian rail infrastructure, much of which ran between the populous centres on the Mediterranean coast such as Haifa, Jaffa and Tel Aviv. Rail operations in the Palestinian territories ceased in 1948.

HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL

The United Nations has been vocal in its criticism of the development and construction of the Jerusalem Light Rail system, describing it as ‘infrastructure serving settlements’. The 14 kilometre long, 23 stop line, from Heil Ha-Avir in the north-east to Mount Herzl in the south-west of the city, was opened in 2011 and passes through territory occupied and illegally annexed by Israel in 1967 – which have made it highly controversial.

The French company Veolia Transport, built the system and still hold a stake in the running of it. Veolia require their train drivers to have completed military service and have Hebrew as their ‘mother tongue’ which excludes the 20% of the population who are Arab. Human rights campaigners have accused the company of complicity in ‘Israeli apartheid policies.’ Alstom, another French company, who provide the rolling stock for the system, lost out on a Saudi Arabian rail development worth around $10 billion as a result of their involvement with the Jerusalem project.

At Nazareth in Galilee, Stan and Brian met Mohammed Zeidan from the Arab Association for Human Rights, who passionately and articulately highlighted the levels of discrimination faced by Palestinian minority citizens in Israel since the Nakba or Catastrophe in 1948 when 700,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homes.

NATIONALITY AND RELIGION

He pointed out that nationality and religion are interchangeable in the Israeli legal system with entitlement to civic rights determined on the basis of status such as being Jewish or having done military service; these provisions create a two tier legal system which leaves some citizens with fewer rights than others. In employment terms Palestinian minority citizens in Israel earn...
completed in 2017. Controversially, six kilometres of the line, most of which will be tunnels, will run into the West Bank. Deutsche Bahn had been advising on the project but withdrew as a result of pressure from Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions campaigners.

The West Bank and Israel can be disorientating places for the visitor. It’s not always clear where you are. Are you in Israel or in Palestine? Occupied or unoccupied? Road signs refer only to Israeli towns, cities and settlements. Many Palestinian villages aren’t included on maps either. There is no road sign to the Bedouin village of Qasr Al-Sir in the northern Negev desert, for instance. More than 2,000 people live there but you wouldn’t know it officially. The Jewish cemetery next door has a signpost. The manipulation of geography is a key weapon in this conflict.

**CONSTANT DISPLACEMENT**
The 200,000 strong indigenous community of Arab Bedouins in the Naqab (Negev) desert are among the poorest people in Israel. They have endured constant displacement since 1948 with half of the population forced into urban townships. The remainder live either in 35 unrecognised villages or ten villages in the ‘process of recognition’. The Israeli government denies basic services – such as water and electricity – to these villages and considers the Bedouin ‘trespassers or squatters on state land’. The communities live under constant threat of home demolition. A satire-defying policy is that the Israelis charge the villagers for the cost of demolishing their homes.

Thanks to Adalah, the Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, Stan and Brian visited Al-Araqib, just north of Beersheva, and met Sheikh Sayyah, whose family have lived in their ancestral village for two centuries. In 2010 the Israeli Land Authority and 1,000 police officers razed the village to the ground, destroying 46 buildings, including 30 homes, and uprooting 4,500 olive trees. The formidable and quietly dignified Sheikh Sayyah stayed but attempts to forcibly displace him continue, including the denial of services and state infrastructure and aerial spraying of cattle, fields and people with toxic chemicals, alongside attacks and arrests on residents. The state and the Jewish National Fund have attempted to forest the land but the villagers have resisted this in the courts.

Stan and Brian were truly moved by what they saw. The bravery, resilience and conviction of the people they met in the face of discrimination, marginalisation and displacement put many of the industrial and political issues faced by ASLEF members into perspective. It is the duty of all trade unionists to stand by those who face injustice.

**HIGH SPEED RAIL LINK**
Israel is planning to build a high speed rail link between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem due to be
Labour MP for Islington North; and John MP for Brighton Pavilion; Jeremy Corbyn, having more than 2.5 million members between them and a number of prominent MPs such as Katy Clark, Labour MP for North Ayrshire and Arran; Caroline Lucas, Green Party MP for Brighton Pavilion; Jeremy Corbyn, Labour MP for Islington North; and John Whelan of ASLEf.

With some 80% of austerity measures still to come, and with the Conservative-Liberal Democrat government lengthening the time they expect their cuts to last, the People’s Assembly could not have come at a better time. But will it fare any better in organising against the cuts than have previous initiatives?

Prior to its launch, a number of national anti-cuts campaigns and organisations – such as the People’s Charter, the national Shop Stewards’ Network, the Right to Work campaign and Unite the Resistance – were set up to challenge the neoliberal’s narrative. None has been able to help mount widespread and effective opposition to the cuts imposed by the coalition. So why should the People’s Assembly be any different?

BREADTH OF SUPPORT

Let’s start with the positive. The size of the meeting on 22 June dwarfed all previous attempts by the other organisations and campaigns when they had their first gatherings. Indeed, it was nearly four times as big as the initial meeting of the group that launched the People’s Assembly. This group, headed by Tony Benn, is the Coalition of Resistance. And well-attended regional People’s Assemblies were held in the run-up to the national launch. Some 800 came to the one in Manchester. So if initial enthusiasm is present, that it is worth fighting back because fighting can win.

McDonnell, Labour MP for Hayes & Harlington, also supporting it. And the way the People’s Assembly came together was in a comradely and non-sectarian manner.

But the task these supporters face is a daunting one – not so much to create the campaigns and struggles against the cuts but to encourage them, increase their numbers and make them collectively more than the sum of their parts. Some of this means mobilising discontented citizens, some of it means co-ordinating existing strikes and demonstrations. But an awful lot of it means persuading ordinary citizens who are not presently engaged that it is worth fighting back because fighting can win.

Citizens against the cuts

At the closing plenary on 22 June, a desire was expressed by one of the day’s organisers that the People’s Assembly meets again, this coming winter, the millions of people that attend do so not as individual campaigners but as the delegates of campaigns representing hundreds of thousands of citizens against the cuts. This is where the going will inevitably get really tough because a number of issues need to be addressed.

First, the cuts do not inevitably unite people in opposition because they do not affect everybody in the same way at the same time. Public sector workers have borne the brunt, so far, as have the most vulnerable in society in the form of welfare cuts and the bedroom tax.

Second, is it realistic to campaign on the basis of opposing all cuts? Not only would some cuts be good – like scrapping nuclear weapons or charitable status for private schools – but surely, and more importantly, would not stopping some of the cuts some of the time not be a boost to getting an effective anti-cuts campaign off the ground? Some success tackling any cuts would be a shot in the arm for morale and confidence.

Third, should there be anti-cuts candidates standing against Labour Party candidates at elections when Labour’s position is that the cuts are ‘too far, too fast’ – ie to make fewer cuts, more slowly?

Fighting back

Finally, when fighting back against the bosses through strike action is at an all-time low, how can workers be inspired to stand up and be counted?

It is these kinds of issues that must urgently be addressed and resolved in a practical manner because the idea of fighting back is patently not enough in itself.

Here, ASLEf activists have a vital role to play. Along with other rail unions, you have consistently campaigned for the return of the railways to public ownership in order to protect and advance the interests of your members as well as the interests of the travelling public. So ASLEf should be able to give its experiences, as a union, on the way to unite the producers and users of a public service into a powerful alliance. And this means the experience of how best to operate within the Labour Party.
On a road to nowhere

Twelve months ahead of the referendum on Scottish independence TOM BURNS of our Perth branch goes Salmond fishing...

N May last year I wrote a piece for the Journal suggesting that although 2014 is the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn, when Robert the Bruce saw off Edward II, English kicking is not a basis for Scottish independence. In twelve months, on Thursday 18 September 2014, the people of Scotland will be asked a simple question. Should Scotland be an independent country? Yes or No. It is, I think, a good time to review the evidence and see whether the case for separation has been made.

It is pleasing to note that the discussion has evolved from an emotional tugging at the heartstrings of a Scottish electorate – as disgruntled by austerity as the rest of Britain – to a more hard headed analysis of what the implications of separation from the rest of the United Kingdom are for the Scottish people.

HEART OF THE MATTER

The biggest problem is defining independence. This may seem ludicrous but it goes to the heart of the matter. Chambers defines independence as ‘not depending or relying on others; not subordinate or subject to control by others; completely self-governing and autonomous.’

So far the SNP has decreed its vision as a Scotland ‘independent in Europe’ but which keeps the Queen, the pound sterling, the Bank of England, the NHS, the Post Office, the BBC, the Inland Revenue and the DVLA, among many other institutions. In fact, the list of organisations the SNP has generously decided to share with the rest of the UK is almost endless. Many people in Scotland may well wonder how independent they really will be?

I am sure I am not alone in concluding that there is a gaping chasm between the flowery rhetoric of the separatists and the stark reality of what their plans will mean in practice.

With only a year to go until Scotland makes its biggest decision for a millennium, the only certainty is that the SNP has been brutally exposed for making things up as they go along and for obviously not thinking through.

RANK HYPOCRISY

Alex Salmond now accepts that membership of institutions like the EU, the UN and NATO will not be automatic. He now accepts the application process to join these organisations will be complicated and time consuming even when no objections are raised. What he has failed to understand is why anyone ‘could possibly object’ to Scotland’s application to join these institutions and the conditions which will be attached to any acceptance.

The European Union is an excellent example. Spain and Italy will object to a separate Scotland as a member state as that would only encourage their own separatist movements – the Basques and Catalans in Spain and the Northern League in Italy. Mr Salmond’s considered response was to threaten to exclude Spanish fishermen from Scottish waters.

Among the conditions of EU entry, confirmed by the President of the European Commission, are membership of the euro and joining the Schengen area, requiring currency and border controls between Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Scotland cannot adopt a credible non-nuclear posture within NATO. It will have to accept a ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy in respect of US military operations in Scotland. Mr Salmond may view this as good politics – I call it rank hypocrisy.

As a small, independent nation Scotland cannot sustain military shipbuilding on the Clyde, nor can it sustain a division-size capability in its projected £2.5 billion budget, as training and HQ costs, among many others, have not been factored in to the arithmetic of this particular equation.

But it is the relationship with the rest of the United Kingdom that causes me the greatest concern. I simply cannot understand what benefit accrues to Scotland when the rest of the UK will no longer be obliged to give any consideration to Scotland’s unique economic and geographical needs.

HOMAGE TO CALEDONIA

Britain, from the Latin Britannia, and Britannicus, was what became, long after the Roman legions had left, England and Wales; while Great Britain refers to England, Scotland, and Wales. The crowns of England and Scotland were united in 1603 when James VI of Scotland became James I of England but, politically, the two countries were not united until the Act of Union of 1707 which created the United Kingdom of Great Britain. The Act of Union of 1801 created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland which, in 1922, became the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
Warm welcome from Lorimer in Leeds

Landlord Peter Lorimer at Elland Road in his Leeds United heyday

To TA District 5 weekend school in Cambridge, organised by DO Nigel Gibson earlier this year, we discussed a visit to the first ASLEF head office in Leeds. Nigel and Howard Kaye, our EC member, put the plan into action and a delegation went on Saturday 22 June as part of an historic, informative and cultural day out to see where the roots of our trade union were born.

The Commercial Inn, on Sweet Street, is where ASLEF had its first ever office in 1881. The pub has seen better days, but the historic value of the establishment is noted by a blue plaque issued by Leeds Civic Trust.

We were made to feel very welcome by the landlord who turned out to be Peter Lorimer of Leeds United fame from the 1960s and ‘70s! Once we introduced ourselves as ASLEF members he was very pleased we had come to pay tribute to the heritage of his establishment. Of course, it would have been rude not to have partaken of a drink or few to soak up the feel of the place! So we adjourned to the lounge and exchanged tales and anecdotes and had a very enjoyable visit.

You can feel the history in the room, where many a debate and ground breaking agreement were thrashed out in years gone by, where the story of our union was born and the seeds planted of where we are today.

Members from King’s Cross, Bishop’s Stortford and Stratford were even treated to a performance on the house piano by one of our retired members, who is rather handy when it comes to tinkling the ivories, so the visit was rounded off with a good old fashioned East End knees-up, albeit in the heart of Yorkshire!

The blue plaque portrays the pub’s previous life as ASLEF head office

John Thorpe, Stratford branch

Fighting for peace, liberty and democracy in Spain

The No Pasarán Memorial Committee held a dedication ceremony to unveil a memorial at the Duchess of Hamilton Park in Motherwell to recognize the volunteers from North Lanarkshire who fought against Fascism, and for liberty and democracy, in the Spanish Civil War. Donations from Motherwell, Edinburgh No 1, Glasgow and Three Bridges helped the fund reach its total.

Nine ASLEF members from Motherwell and Edinburgh No 2 branches, including District 2 EC member Hugh Bradley, joined a crowd of all ages to hear speeches from North Lanarkshire Provost Jim Robertson; International Brigades Memorial Trust member Mike Arnott; Professor Willie Maley, whose father James was a volunteer from Glasgow; and Daniel Gray, author of Homage to Caledonia: Scotland and the Spanish Civil War.

No Pasarán! Por la Paz, la Libertad y la Democracia!

Andy Jones, Motherwell branch secretary

Upcoming events

- **OLD OAK COMMON – 28 SEPTEMBER**
  Ex-81A Old Oak Common are meeting at Paddington on Saturday 28 September at 12:00 under the clock. All welcome. For details email rdorkings@yahoo.com

- **CRICKLEWOOD REUNION – 4 OCTOBER**
  The next reunion is on Friday 4 October at the RAFA Club, Ashburnham Road, Bedford from 12:00.

- **THREE BRIDGES CENTENARY – 20 OCTOBER**
  Three Bridges is celebrating its 100th year as a branch and all past and present ASLEF members associated with the branch are invited to an informal afternoon on Sunday 20 October to celebrate this achievement. Guests include Mick Whelan, Simon Weller, Marz Colombini, Graham Morris and Southern company council. Buffet and bar from 1pm at Three Bridges football club, Jubilee Walk. Further information from Paul Eden on 07952 482443 or paul@homerdaz.com or Roy Luxford on 07778 870937 or roy@royluxford.org.uk

- **FRATTON TRAIN CREW – 21 OCTOBER**
  There will be a reunion of retired Fratton train crew from 12:00-15:00 on Monday 21 October at Fratton Rail & Social Club, Selbourne Terrace. All retired and serving train crew welcome. Contact Gary White on 07798 706204.

- **YORK R.E.S. TRAIN CREW – 26 OCTOBER**
  The very last York R.E.S. train crew reunion will take place on Saturday 26 October at the usual venue, the York Railway Institute, from 7pm till 11pm. A buffet will be provided and, as this is the last one, it would be good to see as many old friends and workmates as possible. Contact Brian Wallace, RMS York branch, for details.

- **ASLEF/NERSWA REUNION – 21 NOVEMBER**
  Annual ASLEF/NERSWA reunion on 21 November at the Gateshead Railway Club, Wellington Street, from 13:00. Old and current members welcome; buffet provided. Contact Rob Porter, secretary, Gateshead & Newcastle branch, for more information.

- **Please send all your branch news and photographs to journal@aslef.org.uk**

Tosh McDonald, ASLEF vice-president, with a memorial to the International Brigades volunteers from Nottinghamshire, reinstated by the Labour county council after the previous Tory regime removed it.
Mick Holder turns back the pages of The Locomotive Journal to September 1913 and a report on education...

FROM PRIMARY TO UNIVERSITY

Wm. Lowth, billed as a guest writer, writes: ‘I am indebted to the editor of The Locomotive Journal for giving me the opportunity to acquaint members of the ASLEF with the facilities open to them to obtain education, and the results of the work of the WEA. The Trade Union Congress has passed resolutions for several years asking for a national system of education free from the primary school to the university. The meaning behind that resolution is that all people should have equal opportunity to the best education that the country can provide. No one with any thought for the future of the nation, or any sense of social justice, will deny the foresight or the reasonableness of such a request.

THE DEMAND FOR EDUCATION

‘But the time when everyone will be able to go to the universities, or even the secondary schools, has not yet come, and the demand for education, not merely technical, but the study of questions that will give men and women a higher and wider conception of their rights and responsibilities, has been so insistent, that in 1903 trade unionists and co-operators formed the organisation now known as the Workers’ Education Association.

UNIVERSITIES TO THE WORKERS

‘The aim of the WEA has been to give practical effect to the suggestion contained in the TUC resolution, that the workers are entitled to the best possible education, and recognising the impossibility, at the present time, of everyone going to universities, has brought the universities to the workers. The tutorial classes that are now in existence throughout Great Britain, and which commenced in 1907, organised under joint committees composed of an equal number of representatives of working-class organisations and representatives of universities, have brought teaching of a high university standard to over 3,000 men and women.’

The WEA, in 2013, is delivering 9,500 part-time courses for 74,000 men and women.
Here’s another benefit of working for ASLEF

Why you should join the AA affinity scheme

• Get the AA’s best prices at enrolment – on average 10% cheaper than buying direct online
• Plus a 10% discount at renewal every year
• More dedicated Patrols than all other UK breakdown services combined
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To join, call 0800 048 0075
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BURSTON STRIKE SCHOOL RALLY –
The longest strike in history!

SUNDAY 1 SEPTEMBER, 2013
10.55am to 3.45pm, Church Green,
Burston, near Diss, Norfolk

Guest Speakers:
Morning: LESLEY MERCER
President, TUC
MARK SERWOTKA,
General Secretary, PCS
STEVE TURNER,
Policy Director, Unite
RICHARD HOWITT,
Labour MEP for the
East of England

Afternoon: MEGAN DOBNEY,
TUC Regional Secretary and
PILGRIM TUCKER,
Community Organiser, Unite

Entertainment by: LEON ROSELSON
RED FLAGS
RMT BRASS BAND

Food and beer tent
Campaign
Community stalls
Organised by Unite (L&amp;E Region) With the support of SERTUC, the Burston Strike School Trustees and Thompsons Solicitors.

TELL THE CONSERVATIVE CONFERENCE
SAVE OUR NHS
DEFEND JOBS AND SERVICES
NO TO AUSTERITY

MANCHESTER
MARCH & RALLY*
SUNDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2013
Assemble Liverpool Road
Manchester M3 4FP from 11am
*Rally in Whitworth Park

*£34 is based on a vehicle cover for Roadside only. Renewal discounts are on an AA standard recurring annual price. Other levels of cover are available. Offer only available to ASLEF employees by calling the number given, quoting the stated reference and paying annually by direct debit under a recurring transaction arrangement. Insurance offered available to new members for their first 12 months of membership only. Renewal offer available to ASLEF employees who are existing AA Members, or who join under the enrichment offer, and will be available at each renewal date until they cease to be ASLEF employees or the withdrawal of this scheme. Offer not available in conjunction with any other offer or discount or on any other AA products/ services. Prices correct at time of issue. **Mintel - UK Vehicle Accident report, September 2012. Searching for insurance intermediaries, authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Registered office: Farnum House, Basing View, Basingstoke RG21 4FA, England & Wales. Registered number 2414212.
**GERRY WOOD SIMPLY ONE OF THE BEST**

It is with immense sadness that I have to report the passing away of another ex-Marylebone driver. Gerald Bennison (he never told me that!) Wood left us on 23 June, just a few days after his 77th birthday.

The funeral was held on 4 July with a superb turnout for a colleague who was quite simply one of the best. Gerry was the sort of man who made my job as company council secretary a real pleasure. In fact, it is because of people like Gerry that I do the job.

I met him on my first day at Marylebone. He handed me a shovel as I walked through the old steam shed, past the Nigel Gresley, then, bless his heart, broke into a wide smile and proceeded to take me under his wing. It was a joy to be his second man on a ballast, as he knew every watering hole on the patch. He even taught me how to get a pint in at Marylebone club on the tightest of turn arounds! How, with the coming of two-way radios on the depot, you could spend the whole shift in the club and still be available as and when the super needed you.

Yes, it was another world and I’m glad I was a part of it with drivers such as Gerry. We didn’t lose touch after he retired, either. We often met up at the Pig’s Ear, or the Camden Beer Festival, and he made a point of coming to my local fest in Peterborough. With the passing away of his fellow driver and friend, Alan ‘Auntie’ Terry, we didn’t see as much of each other, but still had an occasional chat. As with Auntie, Gerry succumbed to the vast quantities of asbestos that could be found all around the job he loved. Happily, he did get Thompsons on the case, but it’s such a sad irony that the job he loved took him from us prematurely.

I want to send all my love, and that of his colleagues from Marylebone, to his family. A family that Gerry got so much strength from when he needed it most. We will all miss him, but would like to thank him for all the wonderful memories he has left us. I am honoured to have known and loved Gerry, a man who was, very simply, one of the best.

Ian Neve, company council secretary, Chiltern Railways

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**KIERON MOORE WORKED HARD, PLAYED HARD**

It is with great sadness that I have to inform you of the sudden death of Kieron Moore of Southport depot on 7 July aged 55. Kieron started on the railway on 27 April 1992 as a carriage cleaner and worked his way up to guard in August 1993. He became a relief driver in April 2000 and fulfilled his dream of becoming a driver in October 2001. He spent a total of 21 years on the railway, he was always helpful to his colleagues, and was well respected on Merseyrail.

Kieron worked hard and played hard, he enjoyed a drink and a fag, and he also enjoyed his holidays and the chance to get his duty free tobacco; used to be coggies but they got too expensive so he started rolling his own.

He was a good family man and, as the priest said at the funeral, there was never a bigger smile on Kieron’s face than when his grandchildren – Kayla, now seven, and Max, now two – were born. He doted on them.

Kieron will be greatly missed at Southport and on Merseyrail and our thoughts go out to all his family, friends, and partner at this very sad and really unbelievable time. Rest in peace, Kieron.

Bill Baxter, company council, Southport

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**HARRY COWLING: A GENTLEMAN**

Harry Cowling sadly passed away in April after losing his brave battle with cancer.

He started as a cleaner at Copley Hill in the 1950s and later became a fireman. He moved to Holbeck in 1964 when Copley Hill closed and then on to Neville Hill as a driver.

A stalwart ASLEF man, he was a great help to many members during the many years he served on the LDC at Neville Hill and Leeds and, later, on the company council of East Coast at Leeds.

Harry was a keen golfer and member at Temple Newsam where he served as captain. He will be sadly missed by his wife Barbara and all his family and will be remembered forever by his many friends. Rest in Peace, my pal Harry Hairycell.

Don Myers, retired driver, Leeds

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**JACK HOUSLEY FILLED A ROOM**

Big Jack Housley always filled a room when he entered.

He proudly served ASLEF throughout his working life; during the miners’ strike he worked alongside many others at Doncaster and surrounding depots showing solidarity in support of their struggle.

On his retirement he became an RMS activist and served as treasurer for the committee in the early years.

He talked at length about his luck in life, having a family he loved, and we know he will be sadly missed by all who crossed his path or supped with him on many occasions.

Once more the flame of ASLEF has flickered, and our great trade union has lost a good servant and loyal comrade. RIP Big Jack.

Tony Bridge, a well-liked man aged 87, and former tug-of-war enthusiast. Tony was an attendant of the Stratford old boys’ club and will be sadly missed by all who attend.

A very muscular but mild-mannered individual, a true Stratford man all the way through. Tony, you will be missed by all your old chums. Rest in peace, mate.

Dave Pizzie, Stratford branch

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**WILLIAM SCOBIE SUDDEN PASSING**

It is with great sadness that I must report the sudden passing of Bro William Scobie, peacefully, at home, on 8 July. Bill was only 53 and having treatment for pancreatic cancer.

Bill began his railway career in 1985 on the platform at Inverness before becoming a guard. He could not have been happier than when he got his driver’s appointment in 2006. He was married to Carol and they had two children, William and Rebecca. Our thoughts and sympathies go out to his family.

Anthony Fraser, Inverness branch

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**TONY BRIDGE TUG-OF-WAR**

Yet another old Stratford man has departed on his last journey. Tony Bridge, a well-liked man aged 87, and former tug-of-war enthusiast. Tony was an attendant of the Stratford old boys’ club and will be sadly missed by all who attend.

A very muscular but mild-mannered individual, a true Stratford man all the way through. Tony, you will be missed by all your old chums. Rest in peace, mate.

Dave Pizzie, Stratford branch
These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the ASLEF Journal at 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN or by email to journal@aslef.org.uk. Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our STAR LETTER feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

Letters

**Time to talk about Europe**

Members placed some very informed letters in previous issues of the Journal on the subject of the European Union and I would like to add to these. It is long overdue that the trade union and labour movement not only revisit positions taken (or not) but, more importantly, start debating EU policy as whole.

Over the last few years, the right-wing media and politicians have had fertile ground to exploit; a vacuum created by the labour movement not addressing issues. We cannot go back to the Blair-Brown days of being gagged; we need real debate.

Most annoying is when people raise issues that are controversial, or oppose EU policy, they are automatically deemed Little Englanders, racist, or worse. John Cryer, MP for Leyton & Wanstead, at our joint Districts 5 and 7 meeting, told us that when he spoke at Westminster making his position clear on the EU he was later called a fascist, by a fellow Labour MP. Some need to understand you can be anti-EU, but not anti-European.

As for the old chestnut about laws protecting workers’ rights, we have always had the power to implement them, like the minimum wage (we should be thinking of a living wage) but our governments have chosen not to implement such laws. Under Blair, in particular, many opportunities were missed.

The opportunism of David Cameron by declaring that, in the next Parliament, he will hold a referendum, should be seen for what it really is, but I believe that Ed Miliband should have received better advice, and quickly declared the same, so as not to fall into policy limbo. Fortunately, a good number of Labour MPs are taking up the challenge.

As for the latest on the EU and the railways, the unelected commissioners have now deemed in their Fourth Railway Package that all European railways should follow the British model of privatisation. We have seen at first hand how this works, yet they will be demanding other European governments follow suit in splitting up their integrated railway networks.

It would be a long term disaster not only for their people but for the railway workers in their industry. The only benefits will, of course, be for those who make money from the

**FLY LIKE AN EAGLE OR YOU’LL END UP AS A DEAD DUCK**

Despite the article in the August Journal on Labour’s plans for the railways promising a ‘forthright pledge’, try as I might, I could find no such policy or pledge. Yes, Maria Eagle adequately described the disastrous privatised railway (something Labour failed to reverse and continued for 13 years in power under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown) and, yes, she certainly welcomed the excellent Rebuilding Rail report, but, as for any pledge, well, that was sadly, and predictably, lacking.

The closest she got was her statement that ‘We need to reform the way our railways are run.’ Hardly a ground breaking pledge, and certainly no policy commitment. If Ms Eagle went to the final part of the Rebuilding Rail report, she’ll find a step by step guide at limited cost to take the industry back into public ownership, all on a plate for a future Labour government.

And there lies the problem for Labour, they’ve banned the word ‘re-nationalisation’ from their vocabulary. It smacks too much of good old-fashioned socialist ideals. You know those ideals, which first saw the creation of trade unions which, in turn, gave birth to the Labour Party, and now lay abandoned by Mr Ed and his predecessors as Labour leaders, more concerned with being popular, rather than having any political principles.

I witnessed this for myself at this year’s AAD where, despite being asked to support a re-nationalised railway, Labour’s floundering Scottish leader, Johann Lamont, failed several times to do so, instead just repeating a commitment to look at ‘all the options’.

Your article was headlined ‘The Eagle has landed!’ but, in truth, the level of Labour’s commitment is more akin to a dead duck!

John Metcalfe,
Carlisle branch

**A question of allegiance**

There has been rather a lot of news recently regarding the Labour Party’s idea of union members opting in rather than opting out, and this has made me question where my political allegiance should lie. When the local Labour Party news popped through my door, I noticed the headline ‘Labour working for you’ and it boasted of local issues they were addressing. The other headline was about the rail freight depot at St Albans and how ‘We continue to fight against it!’

Now, correct me if I’m wrong, but Labour is meant to be the party of the working man; and considering that St Albans has lost British Aerospace, Marconi, and Rolls Royce, to name but a few, you would think they would be all for employment.

Sadly, when I asked the local councillors personally, the Not In My Back Yard view prevailed. There is good news, though. The Tories are pushing it through!

Michael Reeve, driver, Watford

**Fighting the cuts**

Very happy that AAD adopted the motion from Nottingham branch on the Conservative-led coalition government’s cuts. The union is now resolved to oppose all cuts in benefits and services. One way to take that position forward would be for ASLEF nationally to support the Councillors Against Cuts campaign (councillorsagainstcuts.org) which
also has no cuts in benefits and services position. A number of ASLEF Labour councillors have already signed up to it as individuals. I would urge members to visit the site and get your branches to support it.

Tony Byrne, Nottingham

Hot rails in hot weather

Re the piece in the August Journal about railway lines in hot weather, the problem for Network Rail is managing lines that have to cope with a wide annual temperature range, say -10°C to +30°C, and beyond these temperatures problems arise. A derailment of any sort caused by buckled rails, let alone a high speed one, is obviously not going to end well, and the driver at the front knows that more than anyone. The problem is mitigated, if not solved, by speed reductions.

The daily press are apt to suggest that there are countries hotter than this who can cope, so we should too – but the answer is that few deal with the low temperatures as well, so build for the upper temperature range. It’s not practicable to re-stress several thousand miles of rail every season for different temperature ranges, so I think Network Rail take the right approach to our safety and that of our passengers.

Dave Purvis, Eastleigh branch

Dignity and principles

In reply to J.S. Donlon’s letter (May) titled Ex-Miner Doesn’t Miss Maggie, while I am no Ed Miliband supporter, or of the way our new Labour Party seems to be heading, I do agree with Ed that people should not have been celebrating Thatcher’s death by dancing on her picture in the streets. Why? Well, because even though she was one of the most despicable Prime Ministers this country has ever seen, and killed the livelihood of many areas, we should all retain our morals and our principles and keep our dignity.

I treated her death with dignity, and just stayed quiet, allowed her family to grieve and took satisfaction from the fact that her death would not be back so soon without your help.

Dave Thomas, Salisbury

Greener on the other side?

It’s great to see your support for the Jimmy Reid Foundation, and I fully agree with your calls for an integrated, publicly owned, accountable railway for Scotland. However, rather than indulging in point scoring against the SNP for abandoning their commitment to this, it would be more constructive to highlight the one party in Scotland with elected representation which does support this, namely the Scottish Green Party.

The Greens are fully committed to public ownership of public assets and to high quality, properly funded public transport. Which begs the question – why does ASLEF continue to support Labour? Labour no longer supports either of these things nor, indeed, do they stand up for working people any more.

Dr Janet Moxley, Biggar, South Lanarkshire

Labouring in vain

I agree 100% with Driver Donlon. I was on the footplate when Beeching did a hatchet job on the railways. And we still see the effects of that every time we use a motorway. I also agree that the Labour Party must not take for granted our support. I have not fully forgiven them for not making some attempt at reversing some of Thatcher’s policies. Perhaps next time...

Ron Kettle, retired driver

Driver discrimination?

I am a driver on the District line. I would like to ask the question why my grade is the only one in the entire company that is banned from doing voluntary overtime? I understand the original goal was to gain a salary for drivers that would make it unnecessary for them to need to do overtime, however, that was years ago and I, along with a lot of my colleagues, would like the option to be made available and bring us in line with our counterparts. There are now grades who, although on smaller salaries, are earning way above my maximum. Surely this is tantamount to discrimination? All other driver grades (transplant test trains, etc) are allowed to work rest days, so why can’t I?

John Hardesty, Earls Court

Support when needed

On 28 June I had to endure the suicide of a young lad, the situation compounded by finding out he was only 15 years old. I would like to thank the Salisbury LDC Clive Chown and Bob Healey and Salisbury’s branch secretary Annie Rutter for their support in one of the darkest moments of my life. It is also nice to know that, when I was in need, all train crew members rallied around to give me words of encouragement and support. To you all, many thanks. I would not be back so soon without your help.

Dave Thomas, Salisbury

To advertise please phone 020 7323 2400 or send an email to journal@aslef.org.uk

FAVERSHAM branch is selling mugs and tee-shirts ‘devoted’ to Mrs Thatcher! Both are £10 and illustrate the branch view of her vicious right-wing policies. They can be obtained from the branch website www.aslef-favershambranch.co.uk or from Andy Cooke at andycooke69@hotmail.com or (mobile) 07771 923831.

THAMESLINK 25 YEAR SPECIAL EDITION MUGS: Double sided with 319 one side and route branding the other. £5 plus £3 p+p payable to Network Southeast Railway Society. Orders to NSERS, 100 Whitley Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN22 8ND. For further information visit www.networksoutheast.net

THREE BRIDGES branch commemorative centenary badges, limited numbers available, in red and gold and black and gold for £5, cheques payable to ASLEF Three Bridges Branch 213. Further info from Paul Eden (07952 482443) paul@homerdz.com or Dave Mansfield (07816 960331) david.mansfield14@btinternet.com

PADDINGTON PD DEPOT BADGES, good quality hard enamel, £5.95 each incl p+p. Pay with Paypal at intercityexpress125@hotmail.co.uk or call or text Greg Burton on 07930 419850 for cheque address.

MOTHERWELL 100 REGALIA: To celebrate its centenary, Motherwell branch has produced commemorative badges (£5), ties (£7 for blue, blue clip-on or maroon) and brochures (£2.50). Cheques to ‘ASLEF Motherwell Branch Centenary Fund’ and further information from Andy Jones on 07767 07907 or motherwellbs@aslef.org.uk

ENGRAVING: ASLEF driver based in Sunderland branch offers professional engraving at reasonable prices. I can engrave anything you wish, such as the ASLEF logo on a pint tankard which is pictured. For further details contact Paul Potts by email at ppotts1969@hotmail.co.uk

DENNIS BOSTOCK’S UNDERGROUND MEMOIRS 1968-2008 at £15 on a CD data disc containing 450 A4 pages, including photos, with free Ongar line and engineers’ DVD. Text details to 07599 018271. Pay by cheque or postal order only on receipt of discs. In ASLEF, and you, I trust.
¡Viva La Revolución!

A new exhibition at the Royal Academy explores the political and cultural turmoil in Mexico at the start of the 20th century. KEITH RICHMOND gets a taste for bandoliers, moustaches and colourful Modernist murals...

HE Mexican Revolution a century ago was a cultural, as well as a political, turning of the world upside down. La Revolución Mexicana was about peasants, land, and freedom, about the voice of the dispossessed, and the overturning of the established order, but it also resulted in a brave new world of artistic endeavour. Artists – political animals as much as cultural creatures – rushed to produce dynamic images for pamphlets, posters, and newspapers; bold, sometimes primitive, paintings; and extraordinary and colourful murals right across the country.

Poor Mexico; so far from God, and so close to the United States – Porfirio Díaz

In 1910 the centennial celebrations of the start of the armed struggle for independence from colonial Spain turned into a revolution against the corrupt regime of Porfirio Díaz, who had been in power for all but four years since 1876. Small-scale military engagements by Francisco Madero, the liberal opposition leader, led to a bitter, and brutal, ten year conflict during which Pancho Villa struck a deal with Hollywood movie moguls to fight his battles in daylight, after their cameras were in position, and Emiliano Zapata defined the image of the Mexican revolutionary leader as a man of the people with a swaggering bandolier, wide-brimmed sombrero, and enormous moustache.

It was a time of turmoil and art was at the heart of the political, as well as the cultural, process. Bold illustrations in newspapers, especially the engravings of José Guadalupe Posada, reinforced a powerful political message while black and white photographs documenting gruesome scenes – Walter Horne’s compelling sequence of a Triple Execution in Mexico (1916) has a ghostly echo in Robert Capa’s First Fatality on the Day of the Presidential Elections (1940) – not only recorded the bloody reality of revolution but, bizarrely, became a series of best-selling postcards, purchased in industrial quantities by US troops on the border to send greetings to their families up north.

It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees – Emiliano Zapata

In 1920, with hostilities more or less on hold, new President Álvaro Obregón appointed José Vasconcelos, a liberal intellectual, as his Minister of Education. He convinced Diego Rivera, a friend of Picasso and Modigliani, to return from Paris to spearhead a programme of public art. Rivera, and Roberto Montenegro, inspired hundreds of artists to paint colourful and often controversial murals on the walls of public buildings.

If you make a revolution, make it for fun’ – DH Lawrence

Mexico: A Revolution in Art 1910-1940, in the Sackler Wing at the Royal Academy, examines the 30-year period, turbulent politically, dynamic artistically, as Mexicans threw off the political and cultural baggage of the 19th century and sought new ways to reflect what was going on in their country.

It’s not a large exhibition; 120 images arranged in half a dozen rooms. The murals, of course, are missing; however revolutionary the art, it’s hard to move the side of a building across the Atlantic. But there are lots of stunning photographs, and many interesting posters and papers, and a handful of expressive paintings – including a tiny (5cm by 4cm) oil on board self-portrait by Frida Kahlo – which, collectively, give us a flavour of the flowering of modern Mexican art in the wake of the revolution.

Mexico: A Revolution in Art 1910-1940 is at the Royal Academy in London until 29 September. Admission is £10 for adults, £9 for over 60s, £8 for students, and £6 for those aged 12-18 years.
Solution to prize crossword No 88 which appeared in the August 2013 edition of the ASLEF Journal

Across
1 Abuse 4 Cadet 10 House 11 America
12 Restless 13 Mast 15 Poncho 17 Zephyr 19 Dire
20 Macaroni 23 Spanner 24 Tonic 25 Heats 26 Truro

Down
2 Blues 3 Stealthy 5 Alex 6 Epitaph 7 Chiropodist
8 Lapse 9 Masterpiece 14 Decanter 16 Narrate 18 Fairy
21 Owner 22 Knit

Congratulations to Len Sidebotham of Birmingham, who was last month’s winner

Thanks for all your responses to the 88th ASLEF crossword in the August edition. If you successfully complete this month’s crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN by 14 September
Freightliner Heavy Haul

Freight Train Drivers

If you’re an experienced freight train driver, if you’re enthusiastic about your job, and you’d like to be part of the team that makes us the UK’s leading rail freight operator, then we’d like to hear from you. With competitive pay and an opportunity to join a final salary pension scheme, email your CV to guttenl@freightliner.co.uk

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